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Friday, 27 October 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic People's Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 105 *(continued)*

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Commemoration to mark the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: This morning, the General Assembly will hold the third of its plenary meetings devoted to marking the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year.

I now call on Ms. Adelina Covo de Guerrero, Vice-Minister for Youth of Colombia.

Ms. Covo de Guerrero (Colombia) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Colombian Government and the Ibero-American Youth Organization and, first of all, to transmit the greetings of Colombia's young people and their concern for promoting the policies needed for the harmonious development of Latin America's young people and the world's.

We can only be gratified by the demanding environment of this summit, which is in harmony with the current phase of development challenges and the gravity of the issues that are now being tackled by the countries of the world.

The best occasion to redefine the new directions taken by countries in search of development, peace and equality is that which is offered today by the United Nations on its fiftieth anniversary, which has struggled tirelessly for a better world Organization and has made efforts creatively readapt its policies to the new realities that prevail in modern society.

Drawing closer to the realities with which the world's young people live and identifying our responsibilities and our role in resolving the various issues that confront us represent perhaps the most important challenges of this great event.

It should be the constant preoccupation of Governments to devote the necessary importance and priority to the needs of young people.

In Latin America, young people are an object of great concern. In our continent we have more than 90 million people aged 15 to 24, a number which will grow to 105 million by the year 2000. This challenge has both rural and urban dimensions; 63 million of these youngsters live in the cities, and 27 million in the countryside. Among urban youth, the working class, now numbering 25 million persons, is of particular

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significance. Together with the 11 million rural poor, there are 36 million young people living in poverty, a figure which will grow to 42 million if the trend is not reversed.

Young women constitute an important part of subgroups among the young, and their presence will be even greater in the urban environment, particularly in the working class.

This situation, like that of the migratory movements of the youth population in the region, are of great concern. But I wish to draw particular attention to the condition of inequality that affects the youth population. This reality has been characterized by taking into account criteria such as the poverty line according to young people's income levels, their purchasing power and their access to social goods and services.

Colombia's young population represents 27 per cent of the total population of the country, or about 10 million Colombians. Of these, 67 per cent live in urban centres and 33 per cent in rural zones. Approximately 45 per cent of Colombia's young people live in poverty which, for 18 per cent, is extreme. This serious situation is manifest in the increasing restriction of opportunities for effective social integration for youth in national development.

Again, figures enable us to describe this situation. Although in Colombia great efforts have been made in order to extend secondary school availability, only 47 per cent of the population of student age have access to the education system.

There are similar problems with the access of young people to the labour market. In general, the integration of youth into the world of work is characterized by high unemployment levels — more than twice that of the national average — resulting from the prolonged search for work by young people entering employment for the first time. These levels are higher for young people from low-income families.

This situation is aggravated by the paucity of official assistance available to young people, which is indicated by the fact that the population sector aged 12-24 does not constitute for government agencies a clearly defined social sector as a beneficiary of programmes and services.

Owing to the specific historical conditions of our society, we can say that it is among the young that all the factors of violence are most dramatically condensed and expressed, making young people the protagonists of scenarios of greater conflict. Sadly, in our country, injury and violence are the main factors of morbidity and mortality among young men.

Narcotics trafficking and its social, economic and cultural impact on the young are matters of great concern for the Government and society of my country. This impact can be seen in high drug consumption rates, the stimulus to illicit riches, the participation of young people in illegal drug production, cultivation and marketing, the involvement of young people in violent systems and activities such as assassination, or the economic support provided by speculative drug capital, which discourages a culture of productive labour and stimulates violence. As a result, some 50 per cent of the persons accused of crimes in our country are young citizens.

There are, however, areas in which young people are making proposals and in which they are positive social actors. We have found great efforts being made by youth groups and organizations engaged in the search for the social and political recognition to which they are entitled, and for effective integration into national development. These efforts are often ignored by society, and have no impact beyond the immediate neighbourhood or frame of reference.

It is for these reasons that addressing the problem of overcoming poverty and the drugs issue, with young people as the primary object, our major preoccupation as a Government is to bring the general proposals of the National Development Plan creatively into line with the specific needs of Colombian youth.

The "Social Jump", the National Development Plan of the Government of President Ernesto Samper, the collaborative product of all Colombia's active social circles in search of a great domestic commitment to the present and the future, thus fulfilling the mandate of our political Constitution.

As an integral part of the "Social Jump", the Minister of National Education, in collaboration with the project Education: A National Proposal, is coordinating a deliberation and discussion process which, through seminars, assemblies, workshops and other means of discussion and negotiation culminating in regional forums, will lead to national consensus on the National Accord for Education. All those who participate in the local and regional forums and in the education departmental boards will be able to participate in the 10-year education plan.

The objective of the 10-year plan is to construct, with public participation, a longer-term education policy defining norms and agreeing on educational goals and purposes for the next 10 years. It will take into account prior national and regional consultations with trade unionists, teachers, students, parents, business leaders and governmental and non-governmental organizations. We will involve the whole country in converting education into a goal shared by all. From that deliberation, there should emerge very concrete commitments in each sector, which should respond to youth in this important area of development.

The Vice-Ministry for Youth, which coordinates Colombia's Youth Policy with the current Government's social policy, sees young people as political and social beings with rights and duties. For this reason, the Ministry's work focuses on the consolidation of young people's full exercise of their citizenship and the development of public policies aimed at guaranteeing that their needs are met and their interests given voice. In this regard, the guidelines of the Youth Policy of President Samper's Government are oriented towards guaranteeing comprehensive attention to the population of young people, intersectoral action by the State, specially designed policies and programmes, promotional actions founded on the strategic potential of youth in the area of development, the diversity of young people's world as a guide for establishing legitimate policies and the constant search in all our work for equity between male and female.

The Vice-Ministry for Youth focuses its actions on two central areas: integration and development of programmes for the young sector of the population, aimed at the implementation of social policy in areas such as education, health, recreation and sports, culture, employment and housing; and the consolidation of support programmes for regional institutional development, the organization and participation of young people, development of legislation and specific programmes for preventing problems such as drug addiction, AIDS, juvenile delinquency and violence.

Five years before the end of the century, new generations are living in a world full of international information. In this information framework, cooperation is a factor in knowledge, culture and peace, and today it must move ahead as a factor in the training of youth from all continents, as well as in meetings and exchanges between Latin American youths and those of other continents and between youths of the various countries of our continent.

Within this framework of initiatives, the actions we have been developing with the Latin American Youth Organization have been integrated with regional programmes of action for the development of youth in Latin America. The priority areas being addressed include education, employment and job training, health, participation and public institutions, integration and regional cooperation. Also, in conjunction with the National Youth Institute of Chile and under the umbrella of the Latin American Youth Organization, we have proposed to implement training schools for local youth agents in order to build a common framework for the operation of programmes and policies aimed at youth.

Overcoming barriers in economy, science and technology helps everyone, but especially young people. The same holds true for culture, and despite all the differences between countries and continents and the uniqueness of each one, there is much in common between life in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Europe and America.

Consolidating the common features and deepening our understanding of what binds us together, thus expanding the exchange of cultural values between youths of different countries and continents, is a task that is not only feasible, but also essential in order to build of a more harmonious and unified planet for the twenty-first century. We in Colombia dream of a just and prosperous world, a world within the reach of children and youths.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I wish to call the attention of all members to the fact that we have a long list of speakers. None the less, owing to the grave financial situation of the United Nations, the afternoon meeting must be adjourned at 6 p.m. I therefore appeal to all speakers to be brief so that all the participants, some of whom have come here especially for this occasion, can speak within the time allocated for today's meetings.

I now call on the representative of Canada, Ms. Isabelle Poupart, Youth Delegate.

Ms. Poupart (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): On the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, I have the privilege and pleasure to share with the General Assembly some of Canada's perspectives and policies on youth issues.

Since International Youth Year, 10 years ago, we have witnessed significant progress. More children now

survive to become healthy adults: we have halved the rate of infant mortality, and we are on the verge of eradicating some of the diseases that most threaten children's health.

None the less, young people face challenges that did not exist 10 years ago. The world's population is currently growing by about 90 million annually, and between 1995 and 2015 approximately 1.847 billion additional children and young people will be added to the population of the Earth. This means there will be a dizzying increase in the number of young people in need of education, training, jobs and a future.

On top of that, we are living in a period of dramatic transformation in the world of work. Young people today are being called upon to adapt more rapidly than ever before to changes on political, economic and social fronts. Change has become our collective constant. This reality puts enormous pressure on young people the world over, who are expected to prepare for a future that even futurists are unable to foresee.

Canada considers that the international community must do more to respond to the needs of youth, particularly their special needs in making the transition from school to work. We must pay more attention to education and training for those who will be entering the work force in the next 20 to 30 years.

The Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, the Cairo Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Conference on Women all addressed very serious issues facing youth. In the coordinated follow-up to those Conferences, neither Governments nor the United Nations must forget the importance we attach to issues affecting young people. My country hopes that the Commission for Social Development will continue to play a key role in this regard and that it will provide a forum for addressing youth issues, that it will further the study of the situation of the young and, above all, that it will collect, synthesize and refine societal indicators of their situation.

(spoke in English)

Young people are the world's finest resource. We bring to life and to work ideas and energy, innovation and hope, dreams and ambitions. Countries, supported by the international community, must create an enabling environment in which we may meet our potential and participate in our countries' development. In particular there is a need to focus on the many barriers to full equality faced by young women.

If our hopes and dreams are betrayed, then we may see significant increases in poverty, unemployment and marginalization among the young, problems that can result in crime, substance abuse and domestic instability. We also recognize that far too many young people today die in wars or suffer as refugees or displaced persons.

In Canada, we recognize a responsibility to help guide young people through these turbulent times. But we realize that this is not something government can do alone. We are firm believers in the power of partnerships, convinced that it takes the commitment and cooperation of parents, educators, employers and young people to meet the challenge.

In Canada, our vision stems from the simple but profound philosophy that everyone should have safe homes and safe streets, full employment opportunities, and fair and equitable treatment at home, at school and on the job.

Canada believes it is essential that young people be able to become participants and contributors to society. In Canada we help equip young people with skills, and help open the doors to free and full participation by young people in our country's future.

(spoke in French)

The Government of Canada has initiated policies and instituted a series of youth initiatives aimed at empowering young Canadians to discover their own potential to be part of the solution, so they can face the future with confidence. Before establishing these programmes, the Government consulted extensively with youth. Based on that input, the Government developed its Youth Employment and Learning Strategy. Its main components include Youth Service Canada, Youth Internship Canada, Student Summer Job Action and the Canada Student Loans Programme.

We are also proud of our efforts to help youth at the international level. Canada initiated the World Youth Leadership Training Summit, held here at the United Nations last summer. That summit provided youth from around the world the chance to come together and to focus, as agents of change, on their responsibilities and goals. In this context, we will welcome enthusiastically

new initiatives on youth within the United Nations system and on the part of the relevant institutions.

Canada endeavours to offer meaningful educational and work opportunities to young people so that they may contribute to the workplace, the community, our country and soon, we hope, to the United Nations. By engaging Canada's young people in learning and work experiences, we are forming solid citizens who will be able to work for our country's — and this planet's — future. We are developing the workforce necessary to meet the challenges of a global economy, and producing the next generation of national and international leaders, parents and citizens. At the root of that revolution are teenagers and young adults who are turning the tide, working for a better tomorrow.

This celebration of the world's youth is confirmation the revolution has begun. Building on this momentum — person by person, country by country — we will undoubtedly recreate our global community in a way that not only mirrors our own dreams and hopes, but achieves our vision for our youth and our future.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of Peru, Mr. Guillén.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Over the last 10 years, the objectives of International Youth Year have not changed. However, owing to political, economic, social and cultural changes, the relevant needs and interests are now different.

My delegation is aware that the best way of celebrating the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year would have been to adopt the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, a document being drafted through negotiations held within the framework of the Commission for Social Development and also through a Working Group of the Economic and Social Council. We believe that the adoption of this document should strengthen international commitment for its full implementation.

In Peru, 43 per cent of the population is made up of young people and children, and we therefore accord them a very special priority.

My delegation welcomes the fact that the priority areas identified by the international community in the draft Programme of Action that we hope soon to adopt coincide with the specific objectives, strategies and actions of the youth programme of the national plan for the population of Peru for the years 1991-1996.

That programme's general objective is to promote projects and comprehensive actions for Peruvian youth, mainly in the fields of responsible sexuality, education for peace, prevention of drug abuse, employment counselling and the creation of jobs.

In Peru, in order to achieve the general objective of the youth programme, the following three strategies have been considered, to be carried out with the active participation of young people: first, the establishment of a multisectoral, high-level commission made up of representatives of the public administration, of non-governmental organizations and of youth entrusted with the coordination, follow-up and evaluation of the national programme; secondly, priority actions directed at adolescents and young men and women in the poorest areas, who run the highest risk of violence and premature pregnancy; and, thirdly, encouraging the participation of youth organizations in fostering and carrying out programmes for youth, as well as the participation of non-governmental organizations in the development of projects for the prevention of sexual violence against children.

The specific objectives of Peru's youth programme are the following: first, to improve the sexual and reproductive health of youth and reduce the rate of pregnancy and maternal mortality among adolescents; secondly, to improve access to employment and income-generating opportunities for young people; thirdly, to promote the elaboration and execution of strategies to reduce and eliminate sexual violence against youth; fourthly, to promote the creation of youth organizations, which would make it possible for youths to be active in the policies and programmes that concern them; and, fifthly, to improve educational strategies and subject matter for youth. With regard to education, it is important not only to improve the level of basic education, literacy and technical and professional training, but also to promote mutual understanding and the ideals of peace and tolerance among youth.

In that connection, and on this particular occasion, when, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/244, we are commemorating the World Week of Peace, Peru would like to stress the need for States that have signed the Charter of the United Nations to recognize that promoting a culture of peace is part of the responsibility envisaged in it.

In this regard, States Members of the United Nations should, in our own countries, encourage the promotion of an education for peace, designed to foster among children and young people a spirit of peace, tolerance, mutual respect and understanding among nations.

In the future, an international society that has values such as the desire for peace, tolerance, solidarity and respect towards others will be better equipped for social development without barriers, which is something we all seek.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Mozambique, Mrs. Gustava.

Mrs. Gustava (Mozambique): It is an honour and a privilege for me to address this body as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. My delegation attaches great importance to this occasion and we wish, therefore, to express our sincere appreciation and pay homage to all those men and women dedicated to building a world of hope and prosperity for young people.

Needless to say, a better future for succeeding generations depends upon the resources a society can invest in its young people in all critical areas that lead to the sustained social development of mankind.

The tenth anniversary of International Youth Year is yet another golden opportunity for us to reflect and reaffirm our commitment to work together to seek common solutions to collective problems affecting young people throughout the world. The overwhelming presence here this week of Heads of State or Government and other important dignitaries who took part in the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations bears testimony to the firm determination of all nations of the world to work together in matters of mutual concern.

It is gratifying that these celebrations come after a series of important gatherings at the highest level which have taken place in recent years. In those gatherings important decisions have been made by the Commission for Social Development in critical areas identified as high priority in document E/CN.5/1995/9.

Indeed, it is clear in our minds that, if we are to succeed with the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, we will need to adopt and take stock of equally important declarations and programmes of action adopted at previous forums. We fully support the draft World Programme of Action. It is our view that this programme represents a backdrop for the improvement of the deteriorating situation of young people across the world. It provides the practical guidelines, as well as the mechanisms, to promote and improve the well-being and livelihood of youth.

The majority of the world's youth population lives in developing countries, and the fate of young people in many of those countries makes it even harder for them to build their future because of the limited opportunities for education, training for viable employment, access to health and social services, among other factors.

In this context, it is legitimate that priority should be given to those countries, by providing them with adequate resources to enable them to implement specific programmes related to youth. Both individual countries and the international community at large bear the responsibility of ensuring the removal of the root causes of social degradation affecting young people as a result of frustration and lack of encouragement to confront the challenges of their future.

Of particular concern, also, is the phenomenon of use of young people in armed conflicts. Indeed, my Government persistently denounced this practice during the conflict in Mozambique. Today, the consequences of war are enormous and the price stands high in terms of our ability to create the necessary conditions for the social reintegration of young people into civilian life.

Sixteen years of protracted war in Mozambique meant 16 years of economic and social disruption of the country with regard to health, education, employment and other related problems. As President Chissano said in his address at the Special Commemorative Meeting for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations:

> "The unflinching will of the Mozambican people to consolidate peace and democracy must be complemented by the creation of adequate conditions for rebuilding the socio-economic fabric severely affected by 16 years of war." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 40th meeting, p. 17*)

As President Chissano has said, the Government's Five-Year Programme addresses these challenges. The Programme is aimed at ensuring the consolidation of peace and stability, democracy, and national unity, reducing the levels of absolute poverty and improving the

living standards of the people, with greater emphasis on education, health, rural development, promotion of employment and de-mining.

We are working closely with the international community in different areas of social integration with a view to creating jobs in rural areas where the majority of the young people live.

My Government is committed to pursuing these efforts, and we look forward to continued support from the international community for the success of the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of China, Mr. Wang Xuexian.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): It may be more appropriate for a young man than a grey-haired man like me to make this statement, but I also have reason to do so. First, I was once young. Second, I have always loved young people. I am deeply convinced of the irrefutable truth of what the late Chairman Mao Zedong said in those days to China's youth:

> "The world is yours as well as ours, but in the final analysis it is yours. You, the young people, in the prime of life and full of vitality, are like the rising morning sun at eight or nine o'clock. The hope is on you."

It is a major event in the field of youth that, at the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we are gathered here to commemorate the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, to take stock of the United Nations' efforts in youth-related areas, to discuss important global programmes for the work of youth to the year 2000 and beyond, and to designate a date for International Youth Day. This demonstrates the great expectations of the international community from youth and the importance it attaches to the issue of youth. We would like to express our support and congratulations to this meeting.

The year 1985 was designated International Youth Year. Since then, great and profound changes have taken place on the international scene, and these changes have created good opportunities for promoting our efforts in the field of youth. The United Nations has done much useful work in pushing youth activities in a more pragmatic direction, and Member States have made great efforts centred on the theme of "participation, development and peace" as adopted for International Youth Year. The issue of youth has aroused increasing attention from the international community, activities aimed at solving social problems faced by youth have been on the rise, and efforts by different countries in this regard have made progress in varying degrees.

However, from a global point of view, the view of the issue of youth as marginal has not fundamentally changed. The extent of youth's participation in social, economic and cultural activities is far from satisfactory. In many countries and regions, social problems such as poor education, unemployment, disease, poverty, drug abuse and crime are multiplying. It is very disturbing that armed conflicts, natural disasters and social problems have driven large numbers of young people in certain regions to flee their homeland, thus worsening their living conditions. The issue of youth remains a weak link in the chain of the social development efforts of the United Nations. The treatment it receives is far from equal to other fields of social development, and falls far short of the demands of the international community. It is therefore necessary for the international community to make fresh efforts in the face of new situations and challenges.

At present, the gap between developed and developing countries in terms of wealth is widening. A vast number of developing countries are faced with a host of problems such as poverty, backwardness and lack of funds, which directly affect the development and participation of their young people. Young people in developing countries make up 80 per cent of the world's total. A good solution to the problems they face would give great impetus to overall progress on youth issues and contribute to the cause of global social development. The United Nations, and the international community as a whole, should therefore put the emphasis of their youth work on developing countries, attach due importance to the special difficulties and real needs of young people in developing countries and assist developing countries in carrying out positive and pragmatic youth programmes. The budget for youth activities within the United Nations system should be increased accordingly.

The Chinese Government has always supported and taken an active part in international activities in the field of youth. Ten years ago, the Chinese Government hosted the Friendly Gathering of Youth in the Asian and Pacific Region. This year, China presented to the United Nations posters for the tenth anniversary of International Youth

Year. Not long ago, the All-China Youth Federation successfully held in Beijing the East Asian Youth Leaders Conference. We also actively participated in the preparation of the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and have made vigorous efforts with other countries in refining the Programme.

We believe that the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which basically reflects the actual situation of current world youth affairs, is of positive significance to the development of world youth affairs beyond this century. Its adoption will help solve the problems faced by young people in various environments, create conditions for their full and effective participation in social development and decision-making in various countries, increase their access to education, health care and employment, protect them from the danger of drugs, encourage them to participate actively in environmental protection and other social activities, and promote mutual understanding and mutual respect among young people of different racial, religious and cultural backgrounds so that they can enjoy and cherish peace.

Therefore, the Chinese Government supports the adoption of the draft Programme of Action at the current session of the United Nations General Assembly. We hope that all countries will take practical and effective measures earnestly and effectively to implement the Programme of Action in line with the actual conditions and needs of their young people, and will strengthen their cooperation and their exchanges in this regard. We also hope that the United Nations and the international community will play an active role in implementing the Programme of Action, promote and carry out the youth-related programmes of the United Nations system, strengthen coordination, expand technical cooperation, provide the necessary resources, and inject new vitality into global youth work so as to advance it to a new stage.

The Chinese Government has always attached importance to youth work and has formulated and implemented a series of policies concerning the protection and training of young people. There are explicit provisions concerning youth policy in China's Constitution and in relevant laws, the central purpose of which is to protect the rights and interests of young people, facilitate their development, and encourage them to take an active part in political, economic and social development. To protect the rights of minors, the Minors Protection Law of the People's Republic of China came into effect in January 1992. Accordingly, local governments throughout the country have also promulgated laws and regulations for the protection of minors. In recent years, the Chinese Government and youth organizations have carried out, in the light of China's actual conditions, a great variety of national and local activities focusing on the theme of going beyond the century such as the Youth Civilization Project Beyond the Century and the Youth Talents Project Beyond the Century. They have also formulated one theme of China's Agenda 21 programme: youth participation in sustainable development.

By participating actively in the nation's political, economic and social activities, young people in China have already become a very important force in national development. Their representatives are participating in decision-making in the Government and People's Congresses at all levels. In response to the poverty-relief activities advocated by the Government, young people in China have set up 10 million small farms, timberland centres, pastures, orchards and mills throughout the country. They have established the Youth Development Foundations of China, set up the first fund for assisting drop-outs to return to school in poverty-stricken areas, and taken an active part in environmental protection activities and in voluntary tree-planting and "Greenland" projects. Youth centres have also been established in accordance with the special characteristics and needs of young people. Now there are in China 40,000 youth homes, more than 1,100 youth palaces and more than 100 youth publications and periodicals. Psychological counselling centres have been set up in most universities, colleges and high schools. Rehabilitation centres have been established for the young disabled across the country, and cultural facilities for young people in China have been greatly improved.

China has about 600 million young people, who are its most valuable asset. China is shouldering the heavy responsibility of fostering a quarter of the world's young people. The Chinese Government will make further efforts in the field of youth, carry out, in light of its actual conditions, the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, take an active part in United Nations activities in the field of youth, and strengthen its exchanges and cooperation with other countries so as to contribute to the sound development of global youth affairs.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Annette des Iles.

Mrs. des Iles (Trinidad and Tobago): Earlier this week, Heads of State and Government from around the world met in this Hall to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. They reflected on the activities of the United Nations since 1945 and spoke of their future aspirations for this noble Organization. It is significant that on the heels of this historic event, the General Assembly is convening to commemorate the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, because the future of our world will be determined in large measure by the vision, hope and ideals of our young people, and the way in which the problems facing them are addressed.

There is no genius like the genius that resides in the energy and creativity of youth. Young people have the ability to make a dynamic and positive contribution in today's world. They will be the ones to succeed us, and to assume important decision-making positions in the years ahead. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to invest judiciously and generously in today's young men and women, remembering that they constitute a significant group in the population of many of our countries. In my own country, for instance, young people represent no less than one sixth of the total population.

There are certain major areas of concern to youth worldwide. These include employment opportunities, education, health and the problems of drug abuse, crime and violence. These challenges are compounded when many young people feel marginalized or alienated, and excluded from important policy decisions affecting them.

Most countries, especially developing countries, face serious problems of unemployment and underemployment, and youth are among the most severely affected. In Trinidad and Tobago, for example, 75 per cent of the unemployed are young persons. The job market is also increasingly unable to employ youth at their levels of qualifications and skills, and they are likely to be engaged in work below their capability. This is a disconcerting situation because employment provides youth with the means to support themselves, a way of actively contributing to the economic development of their communities, and a means of obtaining a level of independence in the development of adult roles and responsibilities.

Trinidad and Tobago attaches the greatest priority to training and employment programmes for young people. In Trinidad and Tobago, such programmes include the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme and the Apprenticeship for Industrial Mobilization. The Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme comprises a Career Enhancement Project, a Vocational Skills Training Project and a Micro-Entrepreneurship Project. The common theme of the Programme is the overall training and self-development of youth to engender a transformation of their natural skills into an income-earning opportunity. The Apprenticeship for Industrial Mobilization utilizes on-the-job training techniques as a means of equipping young people.

Other approaches adopted by the Government to promote youth employment through training and retraining are: the use of youth camps, which offer a wide range of craft and secretarial courses; trade centres, which concentrate on the construction industry and skills related to house maintenance; and youth centres. The non-governmental organizations and the private sector are also involved in the provision of trade and skills training for young people.

Some other initiatives adopted in Trinidad and Tobago, geared to relieving youth unemployment, include the introduction in 1993 of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which offers temporary employment in projects related mainly to the improvement of the environment, as well as the Aided Self-Help Programme and the Small Business Management Programme, both designed to assist young entrepreneurs. More recently, the Agricultural Development Bank has opened a "youth window", offering soft loans and support services to young people interested in pursuing agriculture.

Trinidad and Tobago has a comprehensive education system but, as in many countries, its inability to provide students with the skills for the changing job market is a matter of concern. Another disturbing development is the deterioration in the performance of young men in the education system, with a growing incidence of drop-outs and functional illiteracy. These concerns were among the issues considered by a National Task Force on Education. The recommendations of the Task Force are being given serious consideration as Trinidad and Tobago attempts to reform the education system to meet today's needs. The crucial role of education in the development process and the growth of individuals, especially young people, forms a cornerstone in attempts to restructure the education system.

Another critical basic need is good health. Key health issues affecting youth include malnutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies, narcotic and psychotropic drug abuse,

misuse of alcohol and tobacco, and psychological and mental disorders. A most disconcerting development is the high increase of young people suffering from HIV/AIDS. The World Health Organization's Global Programme on AIDS states that 50 per cent of HIV infections occur in people aged 15 to 24 and about one fifth of all people who have AIDS are in their twenties. Male youth in the Caribbean are also at high risk due to HIV infection, and AIDS is now a leading cause of death among young men in the region.

Another area in need of urgent attention is widespread drug abuse and drug trafficking and the increase in alcohol consumption and tobacco use among young people. Demand reduction programmes for drugs, tobacco and alcohol need to target more on youth. The drug problem is particularly serious because there is a marked correlation between the increase in drug abuse and violent crimes. In the Caribbean, the typical offender and victim of drug-related violent crimes is the young working-class male.

In Trinidad and Tobago the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme coordinates drug abuse prevention initiatives and fosters and facilitates the efforts of several non-governmental organizations involved in the struggle against drug abuse. A central element of its programme is focused on youth, both in and out of the school system. The Prevention Programme is also involved in treatment and rehabilitation.

Another growing phenomenon that is engaging the attention of policy-makers in the Caribbean is the emergence of street children and the incidence of homelessness among young people. Some of the factors contributing to this development are the deterioration in socio-economic conditions and the effects of drug addiction. The erosion in the family structure and value systems, and the lack of proper role models, are also factors that must be given attention in considering these and other related needs and problems of youth.

I now wish to turn briefly to the issue of institutional arrangements. In Trinidad and Tobago, there exists a wide cross-section of voluntary organizations whose aim is to assist young people in their development. There is an active Youth Affairs Division located in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, and its vision is to foster an environment for the development of youth. It is also recognized that there needs to be an integrated approach to youth policy and that young people must be part of the consultation and decision-making process.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago acknowledges the need to rationalize its youth development thrust, and a comprehensive study on the present situation of youth in Trinidad and Tobago has been commissioned. This study will look at the nature and magnitude of the social problems, attitudes, behaviour and perspectives of young people and present a profile of the country's youth.

With respect to regional cooperation on youth affairs, the Caribbean Centre of the Commonwealth Youth Programme plays a crucial role in coordinating regional policies and programmes. Its activities include youth exchanges, training and seminars. An important tenet of the Commonwealth Youth Programme is to work towards developing a society where young men and women are empowered to develop their potential, creativity and skills. In May this year, a successful meeting of Commonwealth Youth Ministers was held in Trinidad and Tobago. The activities of the United Nations, through its regional commissions, are also extremely useful. In this connection, I wish to make special mention of the meeting held in Chile in September 1991, at which a joint declaration of United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental organizations on policies relating to youth in Latin America and the Caribbean was adopted.

Trinidad and Tobago also wishes to commend the efforts of the United Nations in formulating an international policy on youth, with emphasis on the important themes of participation, development and peace. The adoption and implementation of the proposed World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond will be another significant step forward in helping to address effectively the challenges facing our youth, so as to enhance their participation in and their contribution to society. My delegation places particular emphasis on the recognition, in the draft World Programme of Action, of the essential role of international cooperation, especially as it relates to international technical assistance and advisory services. There must be concerted action by the international community in order to ensure the success of the World Programme.

Young people constitute a major human resource. They are the parents and leaders of tomorrow and a significant force in the economic, political and social development of our countries. It is our responsibility to work with them to ensure a better world for our own

generation and for generations to come. They deserve nothing less.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Paraguay, Mr. Enrique Riera Escudero, Deputy Minister for Youth.

Mr. Riera Escudero (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Republic of Paraguay, which has a long history of authoritarian Governments, has enjoyed full civil and political freedoms for more than six years now, as part of a democratic process which, slowly but surely, is being consolidated and strengthened, with the consensus of a noble, peace-loving and hard-working people that makes daily sacrifices in order to build a better future for its children.

In these first few years the democratic Government has devoted its best efforts to restoring rights that were infringed for three decades and to restructuring the branches of Government, whose balance and interdependence were established in the new national Constitution, which has been in force since 1992.

At the same time, we have created constitutional mechanisms to monitor public affairs. In addition to the unconditional reinstatement of freedom of the press, the National Congress has regained its indispensable autonomy and the power to balance the activities of the executive branch through the office of the Comptroller-General of the Republic, the Ombudsman and bicameral investigative commissions, which have yielded important results in terms of administrative transparency.

Finally, we have established the new Supreme Court of Justice — which is appointing new judges in every jurisdiction of the country — thus completing the restructuring of the third and last branch of government awaiting restoration in this democratic process. Within this legal-political framework, built on the basis of an established timetable, we can say with conviction that the process of democratization in Paraguay is irreversible.

However, despite progress in the political sphere, the democratic system has revealed major economic and social shortcomings as a result of the freedoms that we are enjoying. Nowadays the national Government takes a responsible approach to the structural imbalances in our economy, which created serious social problems that were not given institutional attention for a long time. We come from a State-controlled and overprotective economic system, which, with its paternalistic attitudes and vexatious favouritism, gave rise to unjust inequalities in terms of access to opportunities for personal advancement and in the development of our national economy.

Our present approach to a social market-economy system has made possible the creation of a climate of competence, with equal opportunities, aimed at the sustainable development of the country with social equity in order to make us more efficient and competitive regionally, in the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), and internationally, with the rest of the world.

In this context, a country like ours, where 70 per cent of the population are under 35 years of age and half the people are under 20, has a great future. The Vice-Ministry of Youth, one year after its establishment as a branch of the Ministry of Education and Worship, submitted the first national youth plan, entitled "The Country We Want". The process of drafting this plan was eminently participatory, more than 2,500 youth leaders from all political parties, religious youth organizations, student organizations, trade and labour unions and sports organizations having been brought together through the regional consultative forums that were held in the departments in the interior of the Republic.

In that plan, which was submitted to the President of the Republic on 21 September this year — Youth Day — youth is regarded as "the primary strategic human resource" because young people assimilate new technology more easily, have initiative and are more able to adapt to change with the speed and thoroughness required in our times.

These thousands of Paraguayan young people, who have been living in democracy for more than six years, realize that they are no longer a problem but, rather, our country's solution. But we need to invest in them, not by adopting the mistaken and outdated approach of offering them only frivolities or superficial things, such as sports or entertainment, but by offering them serious opportunities for their complete development and solutions for their fundamental problems, such as work, education and health, as well as addressing other, equally important questions, such as drugs, AIDS, tobacco and alcohol. We are committed to ensuring that youth, representing the present and future of Paraguay, will as soon as possible become part of our democratic process and of the socio-economic development of the country, for the benefit of our people.

The President returned to the Chair.

In addition, we pledge, in this historic Hall, to work intensively to achieve with them an international world that is more peaceful, integrated and united and whose countries pool their efforts, not only because they need each other but also because they have a sincere appreciation of each other's peoples, languages, customs and ideas. Through the exchange of human, scientific and economic resources, we can all help each other in solving the problems of our people and our peoples, which is the supreme and ultimate goal of our efforts.

Today it is no longer possible to imagine a world of isolation, with countries and leaders insensitive to the major problems of mankind, distant from others, walled off by silence, sterile confrontation or the wasteful use of resources for destruction rather than construction. Young people are and in human history will always constitute a vanguard and an inexhaustible moral reserve.

The generation that enters the year 2000 faced with a perceptible crisis of ethical and moral values must renew with more vigour than ever its commitment to society, guided always by its convictions and never by considerations of convenience, respecting human rights and struggling with all its force for the perennial principles of justice, freedom and equality for all.

Let us never abandon these ideals, which are like stars that we may never attain but must never lose sight of in order not to stray from our path.

I wish to conclude with a thought that sums up our vision of the mission of the men and women who live on this beautiful planet: we did not inherit this Earth from our parents; we have it on loan from our children.

The President: I should like to inform the Assembly that the representative of Australia has requested to participate in the debate on this item. Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed yesterday, may I ask the Assembly whether there is any objection to the inclusion of that delegation in the list of speakers?

I see no objection. Australia is therefore included in the list.

I should like again to remind all representatives that we have a long list of speakers. Owing to the serious financial situation of the United Nations, the afternoon meeting has to adjourn at 6 p.m. I therefore appeal to all speakers to keep their statements brief so that all participants, some of whom have come from far away for these meetings, may be able to speak today within the time allocated to these meetings.

I now call on the representative of India, Ms. Murugesan.

Ms. Murugesan (India): The global youth population numbers more than a billion, of which more than 80 per cent are in the developing countries. While this is a message of hope, it is also a challenge. Developing countries today face poverty, population growth, inadequate shelter and housing, and weakening of support systems. India, like many other countries, has to confront these problems by focusing on the potential of youth and devising ways to exploit this through social and economic restructuring and the creation of appropriate social and Government mechanisms.

The proposed United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the adoption of which we support, focuses on 10 critical areas of concern, among them education, employment, poverty, environment, juvenile delinquency and participation in societal decision-making. Special attention is needed to address the concerns of girls and young women. The draft Programme is ambitious, and could provide guidelines or useful inputs for governmental action on youth affairs.

The Government of India has instituted a department at the national level to coordinate youth affairs under its Ministry for Human Resource Development. A number of programmes have been devised to appropriately channel youth energies, and to train the young at all stages. The scheme of national *yuva kendras*, or youth centres, which came into operation in 1972, was aimed at focusing on the employment capabilities of rural youth. These youth centres organize leadership training programmes and social services.

The National Service Scheme is another programme which is aimed at involving university and high school students in rural reconstruction activities to assist the weaker sections of society. These students are also involved in the promotion of national family welfare programmes and the national literacy mission. Besides this, cultural exchanges are arranged between students from various parts of the country and foreign students. The Government provides free primary education throughout the country and, at the higher levels, finances

the education of meritorious students from the weaker sections of the society in addition to subsidizing such higher education for the rest of society.

India also has perhaps one of the largest affirmative action programmes aimed at the upliftment of women and the weaker sections of society.

In the decade between 1985 and 1995, the global social picture has changed. Young people are today faced with tougher choices, fewer opportunities, particularly in the developing countries, and are exposed to societies increasingly succumbing to drugs, AIDS and street crime. The United Nations proposal to improve the situation of youth through concerted action aimed at enhancing youth programmes and their implementation and evaluation at all levels needs all-round support.

The family is the basic building block of society. Good family values have been able to curtail tension, conflict, crime and violence in society, particularly in the young, and have protected, to a large degree, the rights and safety of children, engendered a sound social compact and responsibility, and directly contributed to the internal peace, growth, stability and harmony of society. It is of paramount importance that United Nations activities on human rights education should draw upon the best of successful family traditions and values from all societies, from both the East and the West, and promote them around the globe in the interest of more peaceful societies, and the preservation of human rights and social values for all mankind. Individuals as they grow up must realize that they not only have rights in society, but responsibilities to society as well, and to the global family as a whole, as reflected in the ancient Indian concept of *vasudeva kudumbakkam*, which means that the world is but one family.

For all, particularly young people, the family is the first resource and last resort. It is, however, unfortunate that families today are experiencing socio-economic changes that challenge their very structure, and the multigenerational relationships that they nurture. It is vital for the continuing stability of societies that communications between the younger and the older generations must continue. The Orient continues the tradition of the young caring for the old in the same manner that they had been cared for from their infancy. The aged, whose numbers are increasing, need special attention from the younger generations who have matured under their nourishing care.

The Declaration of Intent on Youth, part I of the draft World Programme of Action, calls upon Governments to provide opportunities for education for the young and productive employment; it also underlines the responsibility of Governments for guaranteeing to the young full enjoyment of all human rights; to take necessary steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls and, above all, to foster in their own societies respect and tolerance among young people for all cultures and religions. The draft Declaration of Intent and the Programme of Action as a whole, which focus on measures to strengthen national capabilities in the field of youth, provide practical guidelines for national policies on youth with international support.

The President: I now call on the representative of Mongolia, Mr. Tserenchimidiin Zorigtbaatar, Foreign Relations Secretary of the Mongolian Youth Federation.

Mr. Zorigtbaatar (Mongolia): It is a great honour for me to represent the youth of Mongolia at this special plenary meeting of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year.

It is especially opportune that this occasion should fall shortly after the solemn commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. This august Hall still holds in the air the unreserved commitment and unfailing faith of the world's leaders to the United Nations of tomorrow. To make tomorrow brighter we, the youth of the world, have to shoulder greater responsibility and exercise a stronger voice, commensurate to the challenges ahead. In this regard, we believe that the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which we hope will be adopted at the end of our deliberations today, will undoubtedly provide the sound policy framework and practical guidelines for national and international action to improve the situation of young people and enhance their participation in society. It is heartening to see that the draft Programme is built upon the important outcome and experience generated at the recent global Conferences held in Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing.

Various problems faced by society are more acutely felt by its young members, since they constitute, by and large, the most vulnerable and marginalized group. This is even more the case for a country like Mongolia, where the young under 35 make up 75 per cent of the entire population. The 1990 wind of change has brought political pluralism and economic liberalization, along with

an outbreak of such ills as poverty, unemployment, social disintegration and erosion of the societal fabric. Young people found themselves among the most vulnerable sector of society, prey to the web of juvenile crime and the phenomena of street children and school drop-outs, illiteracy, unemployment and underemployment and tobacco and alcohol addiction.

The Government of Mongolia, in cooperation with relevant non-governmental organizations, is taking energetic measures to redress and improve the situation of young people. They include, *inter alia*, the organization of short- and long-term training and skill-training for income-generation by young people, thus helping create opportunities for self-employment for the poorer and weaker, and the adoption of policies discouraging tobacco and alcohol use, especially among children.

This year's autumn session of the Mongolian Parliament will consider a draft single youth law aimed at protecting the rights of the young people and ensuring their full participation in the life of society.

The Mongolian Youth Federation, an umbrella organization comprising 12 local organizations and movements with 80,000 members, with grass-roots representation in every administrative unit throughout the country, closely cooperates with the Government and other relevant non-governmental organizations on youth-related issues. The Federation, together with the Labour and Population Policy Ministry, has submitted for the consideration of the Government a draft comprehensive plan of action on youth to the year 2000 and beyond, whose implementation will, we hope, start at the beginning of the next year.

Let me briefly touch on some of the pressing problems facing Mongolian youth today.

First, as in society at large, youth education finds itself in a critical situation. Growing numbers of school drop-outs turn tomorrow's teenagers into illiterates. On the other hand, many of those young people who managed to graduate from high school are unable to pay for their higher education tuition, thus joining the ranks of the unemployed. Therefore, increased attention and greater efforts are needed to provide basic education to the illiterates in the first group and skill-training to those who are functionally illiterate.

The Mongolian Youth Federation, with the support of the European Union, has begun implementation of a two-year project designed to help young single mothers/heads of households, to provide street children with medical care and basic social services, and functionally illiterate youth with skill-training.

Secondly, the poor and low-income young people unable to participate in the health insurance system do not receive any medical care or aid. In this respect, we are focusing our efforts on publicizing preventive measures, disseminating primary health knowledge and practices among a wider circle of youth.

The Mongolian Youth Federation is a full-fledged member of the World Assembly of Youth, the Asian Youth Council and the World Federation of Democratic Youth. We maintain close cooperation with sister organizations in more than 40 countries around the world.

We feel proud that at the initiative of our Federation a strong youth campaign for the protection of the environment has been launched in Ulan Bator as an outcome of the "Wild Nature" workshop held in August 1994 with the participation of youth representatives from 11 countries of the Asia-Pacific region. It is gratifying to note that this Ulan Bator initiative for the preservation of wild nature for succeeding generations has been and will be further manifested in Singapore and Thailand respectively.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the determination of Mongolian young people to collaborate with their sisters and brothers around the world to implement the World Youth Programme to the full.

The President: I now call on the representative of Jamaica, Ms. Cheryl Gordon, Youth Representative.

Ms. Gordon (Jamaica): Ten years ago the United Nations, recognizing the need for international attention to be focused on the situation of the world's youth, particularly their increasing problems, designated 1985 as International Youth Year, with "Participation, Development, Peace" as its theme. The objectives of that special Year were to enhance awareness of the needs and aspirations of youth; to make youth activities an integral part of social and economic development; to enhance youth participation in society; and to promote among youth the ideals of peace, mutual respect and understanding among people.

In accordance with these objectives, an International Youth Conference and World Youth Festival was convened in 1985 in Kingston, Jamaica, and was attended by over 1,000 youth leaders from some 100 countries. Adopted at that Conference was the Kingston Declaration of Principles, in which the youth leaders reaffirmed their adherence to freedom, justice and the democratic way of life. It is significant that in the era of the cold war, when ideology split the nations of the world into hostile camps, the youth of this same world made their voices heard in support of world peace, in keeping with the United Nations theme for 1985.

Another highlight of the Year was the General Assembly's endorsement of guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth. These guidelines contained suggestions on how countries could develop and implement youth policies and programmes according to the needs and situation of each country.

Ten years later, many of the youths of 1985 have grown up. Ten years later, the cold war, thankfully, is over, and so the peoples of the world are no longer divided to such a large extent by ideology. This creates a wonderful opportunity for young people from different parts of the world to have greater interaction with one another, sharing experiences and solutions to common problems. And the world's youths, ever alert, are taking advantage of this opportunity.

The end of the cold war has also redirected global attention to the issue of social development. The link between peace and development has been recognized by the United Nations, which has convened six global conferences since 1990 on themes related to human rights and economic and social development. This concept was recently underscored by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Right Honourable P. J. Patterson. Speaking earlier this year at the World Summit for Social Development, in Copenhagen, he stated,

> "there can be no lasting and universal peace until we forge that new global partnership that eradicates the scourge of poverty, provides adequate shelter, combats illiteracy, malnutrition and drug addiction, affords adequate health security and halts human exploitation".

These problems, which besiege humanity in general, affect youth to an even greater extent. Many of the problems and interests that had been identified as urgent have multiplied in size, scope and intensity. A new "mid-generation" of youth calls for our attention to the same problems and concerns as beset its predecessors. Jamaica is therefore very pleased that the General Assembly has devoted its attention at this year's historic session to stirring the international community to renewed action in order to ensure that the problems and concerns affecting our youth are properly addressed.

Jamaica has always been actively involved in youth activities at the regional and international levels. In 1985 we were honoured to be one of 24 countries selected to come up with a document directed towards proposing solutions for some of the problems of the world's youth. That document was the forerunner of the current draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond, which Jamaica hopes will be adopted during these plenary meetings. At the national level, our youth, like that of other countries, has been the agent and catalyst of social and political change, notably, but not solely, through artistic expression. Jamaican youth delegates participated extensively in two of the Preparatory Committee meetings for the World Summit for Social Development and in a number of activities held earlier this year in honour of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. Jamaica fully endorsed General Assembly resolution 49/152, of December 1994, and in keeping with this commitment, has included representatives from eight governmental and non-governmental organizations in its official delegation to take part in this historic session of the General Assembly. Jamaica's active participation in youth discussions at the international level has born fruit: we were among the first countries to implement a national youth policy, which mirrors the draft World Programme of Action for Youth in many respects.

The draft Programme of Action outlines the issues confronting today's youth, which include education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, recreation and leisure and rights and responsibilities. These concerns are similarly reflected in Jamaica's National Youth Policy, which identifies eight major issues facing our youth. These include the effects of cultural penetration and rising materialism, alienation and lack of recognition and health-related problems.

The draft document also suggests strategies for addressing these issues. With respect to education, the draft Programme proposes to address deficiencies in the education of youth through, for example, improvements in vocational and professional training and access to

apprenticeship programmes. In addition, Governments should establish or strengthen programmes to educate young people about the cultural heritage of their societies.

Similar measures contained in Jamaica's National Youth Policy include an increased emphasis, within educational programmes, on Jamaican culture and heritage, an expansion of our apprenticeship programme and a review of school curricula to ensure that subjects taught are relevant to the requirements of the job market.

Most importantly, Jamaica has this year reintroduced its National Youth Service, which will have very strong components of leadership training and remedial education. The draft Programme also suggests the promotion of self-employment schemes for youth with funding and technical support from Governments and private-sector bodies. Also suggested are cooperative schemes in which young people could be involved in the production and marketing of goods and services. In accordance with our National Youth Policy, Jamaica will be developing model youth-run cooperatives that will include guidelines for management training in entrepreneurial techniques. Similar programmes already exist within the secondary school system.

In the area of agriculture, the draft Programme states that Governments should provide land grants to youth and youth organizations. In line with this renewed focus on agriculture, the Jamaican Government will embark on a major promotion scheme to encourage young people to take up agricultural careers, and to facilitate their doing so, by providing special access to land, capital and technical assistance.

In the area of health, Jamaica's National Policy is geared towards the promotion of health education to encourage positive values and attitudes among our youth. This includes a focus on preventive action as well as programmes designed to instruct youth in parenting skills and responsibilities, health education and family-life education. Teenage fathers and mothers will be specially targeted. Already operating in Jamaica there are programmes designed to assist teenage girls whose education has been interrupted by pregnancy. Many of these programmes also provide counselling for teenage fathers and the parents of teenage mothers.

In the area of drug abuse, Jamaica will target youth organizations as key players in designing and implementing programmes to help reintegrate young people into the community, which we consider to be the best protection against potential drug abuse. Treatment and rehabilitation programmes for young substance abusers will also make use of peer group pressure in a positive way, as young people can participate in therapy sessions for substance abusers.

In line with International Youth Year's theme of participation, Jamaica's youth-leadership programme will also be expanded to enable young people to be effectively represented in decision-making and implementation activities taking place in society. Young people are especially concerned about the preservation of the environment and the increasing use of violence to resolve conflicts.

If I have focused overwhelmingly on problems affecting young people in my country, it is precisely because these are the issues that Jamaican youths have themselves repeatedly emphasized as their major concerns and that they need to see properly addressed. Although various national programmes have been implemented in the past — aimed at skills, training and self-help, among other things — these have had only a limited impact. The truth is that the institutional framework for addressing youth-related problems and issues in Jamaica has been inadequate, with limited coordination and interaction between the various youth organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. This has led to duplication of services, a waste of resources and piecemeal solutions. In addition, there was no officially approved policy on youth to guide agencies so that they would act in accordance with a common set of strategies or towards common goals.

Jamaica's national youth policy was therefore designed to redress all these deficiencies, but first of all to bring an integrated approach to the activities of youth organizations nation wide and to equip all youth with the necessary academic, technical and life-coping skills to foster their personal development. The policy is the product of extensive consultation, participation and discussion involving a wide cross-section of youth-related organizations and groups across Jamaica, both governmental and non-governmental.

We have also strengthened our Youth Division, located in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, to be the focal point for the implementation of our youth policy, coordinating the various youth programmes through collaboration with Government and non-governmental youth organizations. The policy is not intended to be either static or cast in stone. Consultations

towards improving and updating its strategies and their effective implementation will continue to be sought.

As is clear, the policy I have just outlined is, certainly from the point of view of my own country, an extremely ambitious one. It not only comprises new and creative measures to address the needs and aspirations of our youth, but also seeks to reintroduce and reinvigorate traditional and past programmes and practices of previous generations.

Aside from the already present political will and commitment on the part of Governments, financial and technical assistance, as well as advice, are needed if programmes such as those I have outlined are to succeed and to remain on track. In the specific case of Jamaica, the Government has identified, for necessary international assistance, priority measures concerning the establishment of the appropriate institutional structure, the establishment of a database on youth in Jamaica, and the expansion of our National Youth Service. In this respect, United Nations help will be sought to provide technical assistance for consultants, training, attachments, study, visits, equipment, and funds for feasibility studies and pilot projects. More creative means of assistance could be devised to assist youth, which would involve more funds being made available by Governments on a voluntary basis, but which could also involve the provision of non-monetary assistance, such as technical assistance and advice. We as Governments have to remember that youth are not patient. Their concerns and solutions to the problems that affect them cannot be put on hold, pending discussion and bureaucratic red tape, as these concerns and problems often develop and explode at a remarkable pace.

Although the situation of youth differs from one country to another, we believe that young people world wide would benefit from an increased exchange of ideas among themselves and among Governments and Government agencies responsible for youth, on similar questions relating to their young people.

Jamaica, as one of the countries intimately involved in the formulation of the document before the Assembly, fully endorses it and urges fellow Member States to do the same. Of course all the measures contained in the draft Programme of Action will not be fully applicable to all our countries; that is illogical. During the negotiations on the final draft these past three weeks, differences in culture and style again made it obvious that the document could not adopt a blanket approach to concerns facing the world's youth. But then, that was never the intention.

The intention of elaborating this draft Programme of Action was to provide a basic — I repeat, basic — guideline for Governments to consult when designing their youth policies or programmes. This was also in the hope that the attention of the world community would be refocused on the question of youth. Jamaica has designed its youth policy to suit the needs and aspirations of Jamaica's youth, and even these will change in time. Other countries have also formulated, either recently or long ago, youth policies or their equivalents, without feeling constrained by United Nations formulation.

We need to ensure that the cries of our young people are heard and, more importantly, are acted upon at the national, regional and international levels. As we live in an increasingly interdependent world, our youth, more than ever before, are cosmopolitan creatures, and it is only logical that we should follow their example in our approach to the question of international youth policy.

At present, there is national, regional and international consensus on the need for youth to be at the top of national priorities, as other problems and issues that concern Governments now will be left to future Governments to sort out. And since the nations of the future will be inhabited by the youth of today, what better way to ensure their future than to lay the proper foundations — with our youth, for our youth.

The President: I call on the representative of Uganda, Mr. Mukasa-Ssali.

Mr. Mukasa-Ssali (Uganda): During the recent Special Commemorative Meeting on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, social development was one of the subjects highlighted by many Heads of State or Government. It was also the subject of the United Nations World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, which included a specific component on the situation of youth. Indeed, Copenhagen was an important landmark in the evolution of our perception of development. We agreed that development should no longer be defined merely in economic terms but must be people-centred, and that, equally, comprehensive development was no longer a matter of benign charity or of attentive discretion. It is an obligation cast upon all Member States, developed and developing alike.

In the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, a set of measures was agreed on to reverse the deteriorating social situation world wide. As we

commemorate the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, those measures should be embarked upon without any further delay. But most important is the need to react to critical situations rapidly and appropriately. In this respect, the socio-economic situation in developed countries, and in particular in the least developed countries and in sub-Saharan Africa, leaves no doubt about the need for urgent action. It is in those countries that we find rampant deprivation and social dislocation of youth as a result of famine, disease inadequate shelter, unsafe water, the lowest standards of basic education and generalized impoverishment.

Youth are the vanguard of the future. It is in their hands that we shall place today's achievements. Unfortunately, the condition of children, like that of their parents, in a number of countries — especially those of Africa — remains critical due to socio-economic factors and to various forms of neglect, violence and exploitation, and to armed conflict, demographic growth, environmental degradation and the scourge of diseases and epidemics such as HIV/AIDS.

Indeed, praiseworthy efforts are being made by Member States to launch and implement national plans of action in the context of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s. Those efforts need augmentation. My delegation therefore calls upon the international community, the United Nations institutions concerned, financial institutions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to increase the mobilization of resources in order to achieve the Decade's goals, within the framework of the promotion of genuine partnerships to improve the international economic environment and guarantee survival and meaningful development for children.

Debt is a phenomenon that deserves special mention. Persistent debt burden affords most of our countries no opportunity adequately to plan and prepare for the future — and this is the future that will be in the hands of today's youth. In the final analysis, therefore, debt calls for bold once-and-for-all development-oriented action involving all types of debts, including total write-offs, the provision of more concessional resources, and other innovative measures.

In the developed countries, there are social security arrangements like homes and specialized institutions for special social groups such as the aged and the disabled. These are rarely existent in most African countries, though they are occasionally found in urban centres, but even then cover an insignificant number of the special social groups. The main social security for the aged and the disabled has traditionally been the family. But, with increasing poverty, even this crude safety net can no longer be provided. It thus becomes appropriate that any measures to address the special needs of the aged and the disabled in our countries should have a bearing on the general well-being of the family, which again can be fostered by the creation of an enabling environment for growth and improvement in family incomes. Moreover, arrangements like "homes" are generally shunned, as in my own country, in addition to the difficulty of sustaining them adequately in weak economies. Of course, institutions that give training in specialized skills and adaptability, especially in the case of disabled children, will continue to play an important role in the overall integration of those special social groups.

Successful arrangements for social development are built on the strength of family units. Weak families resulting from economic impoverishment may be a source of larger dislocation and conflicts in social set-ups. In fact, conflicts can be traced to socioeconomic inequalities. Action should therefore be targeted at bridging socio-economic gaps by such measures as those aimed at raising incomes of the most vulnerable societies, so that the bare minimum requirements of life, such as food, health, education and shelter — are assured. This is the challenge to all of us, the United Nations system, the multilateral institutions and other actors in the development field.

Lastly, a working group under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council was set up to prepare a draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Negotiations have been going on, but not without difficulties. In the view of my delegation, the Programme of Action that is adopted by this Assembly should be in the interests of the youth, taking into account the cultural and social diversities of all Member States.

The President: I would like to appeal again to all speakers to keep their statements as brief as possible.

I now call on the representative of Singapore, Mr. Seng.

Mr. Seng (Singapore): The tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, which we are observing here today, is an opportunity for us collectively to take stock

of past achievements and think about future directions regarding the situation of youth.

International Youth Year has made two important contributions. First, it has succeeded in raising awareness among the public and decision makers throughout the world regarding the situation of youth. This is important, because in 1995 the world youth population is estimated to number 1.03 billion, or 18 per cent of the total world population. This figure is expected to grow in the coming years, especially in the developing countries. Besides their numerical significance, youth in all countries represent a major human resource for economic development. They are also the building blocks of their societies. It is often said that the youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, it is important that International Youth Year has succeeded in giving priority to youth issues in the national agendas of many countries.

Second, International Youth Year was also instrumental in laying the foundation for what is to become the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The three themes of International Youth Year, which are "participation, development, and peace", provided the starting point for the draft Programme of Action. Much time and effort have gone into its preparation. As a forward-looking document, it can serve as a useful guide for countries to plan and develop their national programmes. It is also a recognition by the international community that the hopes, needs and concerns of youth deserve attention at the national and international level.

Singapore joins the international community in celebrating the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. The National Youth Council of Singapore has organized a wide range of activities to commemorate the occasion. The activities have included an Asian Regional Youth Conference on the Environment; the International Scouts Conference; and a special commemorative issue of Statistics on Youth that will trace the development of Singaporean youth in the past decade. To help publicize this wide array of activities, a special package has been produced for distribution to schools and youth groups in Singapore. Today I am pleased to be able to share this package with delegates.

In Singapore, the National Youth Council is the Government agency which makes youth its main focus. It looks at policies, programmes and activities from the perspective of youth. It serves as the focal point for discussions or debates on youth matters and acts as a catalyst to initiate new programmes and activities. It also coordinates programmes nationwide so that duplication and overlap are minimized. Finally, the National Youth Council provides communication channels for the youth to express their views and opinions on current issues.

It has been 10 years since the first International Youth Year was celebrated in 1985. Today's youth live in quite a different world from that of 10 years ago. In particular, there are two trends which I would like to address. First, since the end of the cold war we have witnessed a resurgence in ethnic-religious conflicts in many parts of the world. Far from being extinguished, primordial forces remain very strong.

In a multiracial and multireligious society such as Singapore, we have to be vigilant against ethnic and religious chauvinism. Therefore, mutual understanding and tolerance among people of different social, racial and religious backgrounds are encouraged. In Singapore, compulsory national service in the military, police force or civil defence authorities has played an extremely important role in forging common links, fostering shared values and a sense of nationhood among young people from diverse backgrounds. During national service, young men at the age of 18, regardless of race, religion, or social and economic background, spend between two and two and a half years living and working together. Thereafter, they serve in the reserve for a further 20 to 30 years, meeting regularly. In the process, they learn not only how to defend the country, but also how to live harmoniously with each other.

There are also a variety of youth organizations in Singapore which bring together young people from different races and backgrounds. The biggest of these is the People's Association Youth Movement which has 81 branches and more than 100,000 members. The Singapore Government actively supports the activities of youth organizations in Singapore to bring young people together to participate in meaningful activities. An example is the Youth Development Fund, which was established in 1993 with a S$3 million endowment fund to promote youth projects which benefit society. More than 20 projects have been carried out under the sponsorship of the Youth Development Fund. They span a wide spectrum, ranging from environmental projects to organizing concerts for the disabled.

A second project is Project E, which stands for "explore, endeavour, experience and expedition". It was also launched in 1993 with a S$5.2 million grant from

the Government to encourage youth to venture beyond Singapore and to participate in outdoor activities. To date, more than 600 overseas expeditions and adventure programmes involving more than 12,000 participants have been organized. By providing channels for youth from different backgrounds to participate together in worthy and meaningful activities, we hope that the youth of Singapore will learn mutual understanding and religious tolerance.

The last 10 years have also witnessed significant advances in information technology. Besides television and other forms of mass media, the revolution in electronic multimedia will have a significant impact on how young people acquire their knowledge, values and modes of behaviour. Increasingly, we are living in a borderless world where resources, ideas and information move freely, very often through cyberspace. The Internet, in particular, will become a powerful influence on youth. The Internet now has over 30 million subscribers and attracts more than a million new ones every month. While the Internet is invaluable as a global network for the exchange of information, it is also open to abuse. For example, most of us will have read about how paedophiles have established their own meeting corner on the Internet. There are also worrying reports of youth gaining access to pornography on the Internet.

We could respond to the problem in two ways. One would be to avoid the problem by restricting young people's access to the Internet. However, this is both impractical and untenable. Such a response would be tantamount to throwing away the baby with the bath water. Another way is to educate youth on the healthy use of the Internet. In Singapore, the National Youth Council has chosen the latter course. It has introduced two electronic communication programmes. One is called Talkshop Café, which is an electronic forum page for young people to share their views on current topics. The second is called InfoYouth which puts together under one roof all the information on youth organizations, programmes and activities in Singapore.

In Singapore, we regard young people as an important asset of our society. The youth of today are the leaders who will take Singapore into the next century. Countries which ignore their young people do so at their own peril. The concerns of youth deserve our attention. The needs of youth deserve our investment. The hopes of youth deserve our encouragement.

The President: I now call on the representative of Malta, Mr. John M. Demanuele, the Director for Youth Affairs, Ministry for Justice and the Arts.

Mr. Demanuele (Malta): In increasing the effectiveness of development policies and implementation programmes, it is vital that young people and their potential contribution to development remain high on the agenda of Governments. Since national situations vary, policies and programmes for youth should be tuned to meet the exigencies of the country in question within the parameters set by United Nations guidelines.

Recognizing the role and needs of young people, the United Nations has spurred Member States into paying increased attention to youth and their vital contribution to development aspirations. Declaring 1985 as International Youth Year was meant to set the mark on programmes and policies to elevate the status of young people through appropriate Government action as well as increased participation by youth non-governmental organizations in the process of co-management and decision-making.

That year brought together our national organizations concerned with youth matters under the umbrella of the National Committee for the International Youth Year and more importantly provided the opportunity to realize the need for coordinated efforts in the development of youth programmes.

Today, 10 years later, we live in a world of continuous change. The old continent of Europe is shaping a new image thanks to the action of institutions such as the European Union and the Council of Europe. Within these organizations young people have the opportunity to search for a clear identity, a stable present and a better future. Young people and youth organizations are playing an important part in the process of European integration. World wide, young people aspire to be cornerstones in the shaping and building of one great global village made not of utopian aspirations but of concrete opportunities for a better life.

This new world, even more than that of today, should be marked by a freer flow of information, persons, goods, services and communications. Young people are rightfully concerned about the future, because this new global village will be the reality of their everyday life in days to come. Key players in this new scenario are young people and youth organizations. In facing the challenge of building a better social and economic environment, they are on the same footing as

politicians and decision makers, and therefore demand to be considered as real partners.

We live the reality of an ongoing revolution in the traditional way of life with new technologies, exchanges at all levels, global interdependence and new social and ideological conflicts. In the search for their personal and cultural identity, young adults want to contribute and to play an important social role. Their attitude is not antagonistic. They want to contribute and be part of society, making it a place with which they can better identify themselves and become involved and committed. Nationalistic, monocultural social concepts have become multinational and multicultural. Diversity is an enrichment, not a reason for intolerance, racism or xenophobia.

Some tend to believe that a large number of young people, especially in the more affluent countries, are withdrawing from politics and public affairs. Others feel that young people are unmotivated, apathetic, individualistic and self-centred and have lost enthusiasm for promoting social values. Economic well-being and ideological and cultural conflicts influence and affect young people's lives, particularly when complex societies are characterized by the absence of social prospects and contradictions within the social system. In a consumer society, young people appear to live with the single objective of possessing the ever more sophisticated goods constantly coming onto the market. Elsewhere, young people face far different prospects and objectives. Some countries continue to be characterized by endemic and pervasive poverty, economic recessions and armed conflicts compounded by debilitating or fatal illnesses.

It is no longer possible to speak of young people as a single group with common expectations. They view and live society differently because they are experiencing different realities and situations in a socio-economic and cultural context of which there is no standard image. Young people constitute the group that is potentially the hardest hit in any economic recession. School-leavers have problems building careers and securing appropriate qualifications. They expect to find a job and become independent, but they are also very selective concerning their job expectations.

Sometimes young people become tired of living in a society based on permanent competition. They reject a school and university system based on competition and prefer a system based on the recognition of every individual's abilities. This situation is understandable, because after years of study and training, young people cannot afford to find a place in a society which seems to reject them.

Youth unemployment raises another problem: that of young people's place in society and the issue of social and occupational integration. Extended education increases their dependence on their elders, and unemployment aggravates this. This situation leads to prolonged financial and social dependence and makes it difficult for young people to develop their personal autonomy.

Young people feel that the path to take is that of a search for identity through cultures, lifestyles and forms of expression, in order to feel in harmony with the world around them. Speaking out is one way for them to play an active part in the community. This is where the role of youth non-governmental organizations becomes important. Young people join forces to reflect on the problems they encounter and then to act on them. By being members of youth organizations, by committing themselves and participating in society, they look for social progress and evolution in a society where freedom of the individual is linked to participation in collective life.

Youth today have a vision which sees them projected towards the future. They also have a remarkable power of influence on public opinion. Young people are the richest resource of our society.

Participation is the optimum medium through which we can build tomorrow's society. This process encourages young people to remain within, integrate into and lead fuller lives in society, where they can find ideas with which they can identify and to which they are willing to commit themselves. Participation provides training in democracy and helps them become accepted as a resource rather than viewed as a problem. It is more than a question of involvement in institutions and decision-making. It is vital to stress at this point the role of youth organizations in participation. They can provide the links at the social, cultural, spiritual, economic and political levels between youth and governmental institutions. Youth organizations give concrete expression to commitment and significance to solidarity by providing young people with the opportunity to participate in the construction of the future.

On the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, the United Nations is, more than ever, fully aware of this role and commitment of youth organizations. Now

more than ever before, young people have to see themselves as global citizens as well as national citizens. The involvement of youth networks with United Nations programmes on subjects such as health, environment, employment and disarmament is an important part of the information exchange and can also influence and even transform these programmes. One hopes that the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year will be another step on the road to joint projects between the United Nations and youth organizations. Strength thrives on unity.

Youth in the year 2000 will be living in a highly competitive world marked by cultural, economic, social and political upheavals. If young people are to cope with this development, they need to be acquainted with new technologies, learn languages and develop social and cultural understanding. Youth exchanges and the promotion of youth mobility are effective means to enable young people to experience the world's diverse cultural, linguistic and religious traditions. Young people are pushing back national frontiers.

Intergovernmental cooperation in the field of youth should be a priority on Government agendas. It offers the possibility of sharing experience in combatting the difficulties facing young people, acts as a barrier to xenophobia and racism and contributes to the building of democratic ideals. All young people must be given the possibility of living this formative experience. This, however, depends on the political will of governments and on the consequent funding on a large scale which such mobility and exchange projects require.

An important matter of concern for Governments and youth organizations is North-South relations, a vital problem for the future of the world. Youth organizations and young people are very concerned about this, and try to promote interdependence and solidarity between the countries of the North and the developing countries of the South.

The Government of Malta is fully aware of the aspirations and rights of young people today. It encourages a spirit of enterprise and academic attainment, provides the infrastructure necessary for employment in various sectors and promotes exchange and mobility projects with various countries. In collaboration with the National Youth Council and other bodies working in the youth field, it has produced a national youth policy which seeks to set out the objectives to be achieved for youth in Maltese society and to provide guidelines for the implementation of these objectives.

It is the policy of the Government of Malta, as outlined in its national youth policy: to provide youth with equal opportunity to education free of any charge, including education at the tertiary level, and to cultural formation directed at enhancing personal growth; to seek to understand the just aspirations of youth and to direct its resources to their fulfilment; to integrate young people in the mainstream of the social, political and economic life of the country, recognizing them as a vital element of the future of the nation; to develop among youth a sense of intergenerational solidarity, cooperation among themselves and a commitment to those with special needs; to assist young people in the further development of a European consciousness based on the creation of an awareness of a common European culture emanating from different traditions; to instil in young people a spirit of self-confidence and a belief in their ability to realize their potential in society; to nurture young people's spirit of altruism and self-sacrifice and their attachment to ideals; to appreciate the importance of youth as a positive force for change and renewal; to encourage the appreciation of cultural diversity and assist youth mobility as a major tool in furthering first-hand knowledge of different cultures and ways of life; and to endeavour to strengthen the moral and spiritual values of young people.

In 1992, the University of Malta, following an approach from the Ministry responsible for youth, set up an Institute of Youth Studies. The Institute carries out courses up to degree level for the training of qualified personnel to work in the youth field. It carries out research on the situation of young people in Malta and provides information and suggestions for furthering our youth policy.

The establishment of youth centres is encouraged and supported, while most local councils cater for the needs of young people through an office of a counsellor responsible for youth affairs. The Government of Malta adopts policies assisting young people to find and own decent housing, to seek profitable employment, to have access to all necessary data and means to further their healthy well-being, to assist young people with special needs, marginalized youth and youth at risk, to overcome their difficulties and recover their self-esteem.

Last year, the Government of Malta, together with the National Youth Council, hosted the first-ever Euro-Arab youth conference, which confirmed Malta's rightful aspirations as a cultural and political centre in the Mediterranean, a focal point where diverging views and

policies may be freely discussed and analysed. These policies being pursued by the Government of Malta should ensure the development of a solid base from which young people can launch their vision, hopes and aspirations towards a better world of opportunities at the start of the next millennium.

The President: I now call on the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, Mrs. Kaba.

Mrs. Kaba (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): It gives me pleasure to take the opportunity of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year to stress the importance for Côte d'Ivoire of the question of youth and the integration of young people in the process of the economic and social development of our country.

Youth represent 18 per cent of the world population, that is, 1.01 billion persons between 15 to 24 years of age; 84 per cent of these people live in developing countries and represent a challenge within the context of the economic and social crisis that rages in Africa, as well as representing the enormous potential on which the future of our continent is based.

Since 1985 — International Youth Year — the number of young people in the population of Africa has more than doubled, rising from 42.2 million to 105.2 million in 10 years. This growth tied to the almost chronic demographic explosion in our country has not been accompanied by a proportionate increase in resources. On the contrary, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa have gone through a period of economic recession aggravated by the drying up of the flow of external resources. Thus, the massive arrival of these young people, some of them skilled, on the labour market has represented an additional burden for economies in recession that have undergone the inescapable treatment administered by the international financial institutions. The consequence of this is underemployment, unemployment for most of those ejected by the school system, and real impoverishment for all.

In most cases the health and education infrastructures have not been able to meet the social and cultural needs of young people. The result of this has been a rural exodus, the uncontrolled growth of major cities with the arrival of young people from the countryside in search of employment, their marginalization, and consequently the social ills that we are all familiar with: drugs, juvenile delinquency, crime and prostitution.

Côte d'Ivoire, although it gives priority to youth questions in its economic and social policy, has not been spared by this phenomenon. My country has invested in health and education at all levels, provided sporting and cultural facilities, and granted study scholarships to deserving students from modest circumstances. This made it possible, in the first two decades of independence, to cope successfully with our responsibilities for the young population. But the economic crisis of the last decade has made it impossible to respond to all their needs.

However, thanks to the slight economic recovery, the Government's primary concern has been to give young people outside the school system the opportunity to study and to learn a trade. Crafts, art, agriculture, fish breeding and various small trades have enabled these youngsters to take their place in the economic development of our country. The task is big and the resources still modest, but the Government of Côte d'Ivoire is working to absorb youth unemployment by providing job opportunities.

While youth are a challenge to our countries, they also represent appreciable wealth when they are empowered to take their own future in hand. If this is to happen, we must first listen to them and take account of their aspirations, their wishes and their vision of society. Young people have an extraordinary capacity for mobilization, and they display real determination in defending the causes that are dear to them. If this energy can be channelled in the right direction through suitable education, these young people can be the best vehicles for such values as tolerance, mutual understanding and solidarity.

Youth organizations in Europe are fighting against racial discrimination and are helping to mould a new world in which differences will be accepted. It was young people who fell in Soweto in the fight against apartheid. We must enable young people to organize, to meet each other, to have exchanges with youth from other parts of the world, so that they understand and appreciate each other better.

Moreover, young people have a sense of innovation and creativeness that can be a valuable asset in devising and implementing policies for economic and social development. They deserve to be considered as fully fledged citizens and to have the chance to participate in all activities in order to cultivate their sense of responsibility.

We can then be proud of our young people, for they will be responsible, positive and creative, while retaining the spontaneity that is the charm of youth.

The President: I now call on Ms. Malin Berggren, Youth Delegate of Sweden.

Ms. Berggren (Sweden): When I began to prepare for this speech a couple of weeks ago I asked a close friend what he thought I should say. "Well, Malin," he said, "I had to write an essay in the eighth grade on the subject 'What I would say to the United Nations General Assembly if I ever had the chance'. Just read that."

Today, I actually have the opportunity of doing what millions of young people would like to do: address the General Assembly of the United Nations. More than anything else, I wish to use this opportunity of participating here today to stress exactly that — participation. Participation of youth in all sectors of society and in all areas of decision-making is the only way for us to tackle the challenges that face young people.

This historic week started with a unique meeting of Heads of State and Government and, let us hope, will end with the adoption of the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. In this Hall the Heads of State and Government stressed the need to reform the United Nations to enable it better to meet the demands of today and tomorrow. I am convinced that we, the young people, and our participation are an important part of the answer. With our perspectives, energy and ideas, we can contribute something positive, forward-looking and constructive.

During these days it has often been said that young people are the *future*. That is true, but it is only part of the truth. Young people are both actors and factors in society *at present*. With a greater sense of responsibility, we can also feel greater commitment to the future. We, the young people, must therefore be considered a resource, and not a problem.

We are about to adopt — I really hope — the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. I guess we all feel that the draft Programme could have been better. However, let us consider it to be the start, not the end, of a necessary process. It is now my hope, and the hope of the Swedish Government, that the draft Programme will lead to a strengthened role for youth at all levels: local, national and international.

We welcome the fact that the draft World Programme of Action has taken into account the results achieved at the recent conferences on environment in Rio, on human rights in Vienna, on population in Cairo, on social development in Copenhagen and on women in Beijing. Young people have an unconventional wisdom that is needed when tackling the challenging results of these meetings. The draft World Programme of Action also stresses the need to involve youth in actions on all these issues.

The implementation of the draft World Programme of Action will be the responsibility of Governments. It will require national mechanisms for integrated youth policies and programmes. It will also require — maybe most important — possibilities for young people to participate in the implementation.

So, how does the United Nations measure up to the tasks set out in the draft World Programme of Action? It is my opinion that the present United Nations machinery for youth does not give young people sufficient possibilities to influence the work of the Organization. The United Nations needs effective channels of communication between youth organizations and the entire United Nations system — channels for talk but, even more, channels for action; channels for, by and together with young people. In this context, Sweden strongly supports a United Nations youth forum with a great influence by youth organizations in all stages of the process.

Having highlighted the importance of participation by youth, I also want to point out one specific area where young people do not want to participate. That is war. Youth has no future in war. Conflict prevention programmes for and by young people will enhance our role in preventing war. Youth organizations can be consulted on fact-finding, contribute to early warning and shape the very political will at home that can bring our Governments to action.

This year, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, is one full of talk of reform and of promise for the future. The future is here today — in schools, in homes, in playgrounds and in this Hall. I urge you to look, and to listen to it.

Programme of work

The President: On the morning of Tuesday, 31 October 1995, the Assembly will take up, as the first item, agenda item 48, entitled "Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)".

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.